

December 13, 2004

Dear Families:

As Parent Consultants on the First Steps staff, we would like to welcome you to the First Steps program. We hope things are going well for you and your children. Each of us has or had a child that was in the First Steps program so we understand the importance of early intervention. We are writing to give you an update on the status of First Steps and to inform you of some of changes that are coming our way.

We recognize that families can have more impact on their children's development by just being involved in regular everyday activities. You already know that you are the most important person in your child's life. You are there for meals, playtime, bath time, getting them dressed, and making sure they have what they need. In other words you are the main person in your child's life and their greatest teacher! The goal of First Steps, as an early intervention program, is to support your family's ability to teach your child by providing consultation from professionals in the area of your child's developmental need.

First Steps is a program that will focus on your child's developmental needs! In order for this program to continue to provide quality services for the children and families of Kentucky, we have to be given the opportunity to redesign the program to give our kids what the best Early Childhood Development specialists have shown to be the best for our children. We want you to hear directly from us (parent consultants) that adjustments have been made in the program to best meet the needs of all children and families.

Every day parents and caregivers are involved in their children's development. Families have many opportunities to improve their child's development during the routines of everyday life.

The early interventionist visiting the child and family at home or at daycare shares their specific strategies to maximize natural learning opportunities. The providers' consultation should focus on sharing information and supporting your family and other caregivers in your child's life.

As parents ourselves, we have asked ourselves some hard questions! Let's go over a couple of them. (Keep in mind, if you have other questions, please feel free to let us know.)

1. Is this consultation method appropriate for children who have severe delays and/or disabilities?
*Yes, because families who work with early intervention providers and receive consultation are going to be able to give their children more daily developmental intervention than they would be able to get from an interventionist who visits once a week.
2. What if our child's needs make us feel that we need more consultation?
*You have a whole team of people who are there to help identify your child's needs, the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) Team. You, the parent, as a member of this team, will bring your concerns for discussion to the team meeting. If the team feels that more consultation is warranted, they will make the proper referral to the Record Review Team. If a change in the plan is needed, the review team, consisting of several of our child development specialists will recommend the best service model for your child. If additional consultative time is recommended, then it will be added to your child's plan.

As First Steps Parent Consultants, we have children who have mild to severe delays or disabilities. Our children have benefited from early intervention through different types of service delivery models. We know from experience that it was our family and/or caregiver who were there most of the time, doing most of the daily intervention. We all agree that this method of service delivery, which supports families in doing the therapy within their everyday lives, is the best choice.

Please contact us if you have any questions or want additional information or resources. We want to hear from you during this time of change. On the back side of this letter, you will find a listing of contact information for the seven Parent Consultants and the counties they serve.

Sincerely,
First Steps Parent Consultants

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